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New Perspectives in Senegal

The Senegalese Mohamed Elhaj (42) returns home in mid-November 2009 using the return assistance.

The hardship of life in the emergency accommodation of a community within the Canton of St. Gallen weighs more and more heavily on him. He is tired of killing his time day by day, only to return to the unloving place of accommodation to stay the night there. In addition, it is late autumn and decidedly too cold to his liking. After a number of difficult years abroad, he wants to return home at last and take his life in hand himself again. He discusses this with his wife in Dakar.

A short while later Mr Elhaj makes an appointment with the Return Counselling Office of St. Gallen. During the conversation, he explains that after his return, he wishes to start up a small shop selling cosmetic products together with his wife. At the same time, he intends to take up fishing again as he is familiar with it.

His business plan is approved by the FOM (Federal Office for Migration).

Information

Besides 1000 francs in terms of start-off support, voluntary returnees may request additional assistance up to a maximum of 3000 francs at the FOM (Federal Office for Migration). For this purpose, the RKB works out a viable business plan together with the returnee and forwards it to the FOM for approval.



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Little more than 3 weeks later – briefly before the onset of winter in Switzerland – Mr Elhaj is sitting on the airplane to Dakar.

Back home

As soon as after a week, Mr Elhaj reports to IOM in Dakar. The conditions for an additional assistance payout are defined. He has to present a tenancy contract for his shop and proof of entry in the Commercial Register. In February 2010, he provides the documents required, as well as various receipts of products already purchased.

In July 2010, IOM Dakar carries out a monitoring visit. Mr Elhaj says that although his economic situation is still difficult, he intends to stay in his country, and that his shop is currently feeding up to 10 people.

Mr Elhaj has taken up fishing again to top up the revenue for his family a little. He would like to receive more information about micro-credit opportunities as he wishes to develop this source of income. Not without pride, he reports that he has already been able to employ a person in his business.

The Return Counselling Office of St. Gallen wishes Mr Elhaj much success in his further undertakings.

* name has been changed by the RKB editor

Information from the Return Counselling Office



Who can benefit from the return assistance provided by the Federal Office for Migration (FOM)

- asylum seekers whose proceedings are pending
- rejected asylum seekers and persons with a negative decision (decision not to proceed), even if the deadline to leave has past
- asylum seekers who have been provisionally admitted
- recognised refugees
- victims of trafficking in human beings

Conditions

- controlled independent leaving
- no crimes or recurrent offences
- indigence

5 Country Programmes

The WESTERN BALKANS country programme ends at the end of this year. The NIGERIA, GUINEA-CONAKRY and GEORGIA country programmes are extended by another year until the end of 2011. Programme performances remain unchanged. Finally, the IRAQ country programme has been extended until 30 June 2012.

Individual Return Assistance

Where no country programme is offered, a voluntary returnee can request individual return assistance. In such cases, the FOM (Federal Office for Migration) usually pays 1000 francs in start-off support per adult person and 500 francs per child. In addition, the returnee has the opportunity to request up to a max. 3000 francs in project support.

EU States/countries exempted from visa requirements

Asylum seekers from EU States are not entitled to financial support from the FOM in the event of voluntary return. Individuals having entered Switzerland after 1 January 2010 and who are exempted from the requirement of a visa to stay in Switzerland for up to three months, will receive a lump sum of a maximum 100 francs per adult person and 50 francs per child. This ruling currently applies to Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Croatia, and has recently also come into effect for individuals from Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina having entered Switzerland after mid-December 2010.

Outlook

Country programme? What is behind this term. We present the NIGERIA country programme of the Federal Office for Migration and inquire with IOM Bern about its sustainability on the spot.

The Return Counselling Office of the Canton of St. Gallen

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